

Govt. UPG MIDDLE SCHOOL TALA, CHANHO

STUDENT TEACHER – UPENDRA MAHTO

Attested



Principal

Bharathi College of Education
Kandri, Mandar, Ranchi

Kali and the Rat Snake



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Before you read

This story is about a boy, Kali who belongs to Irula tribe of Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu. The people of Irula tribe are famous as snake catchers and Kali's father was one of the best in the tribe. This however makes his father and Kali, somewhat abnormal in the eyes of his classmates. Will Kali be able to make friends in his class? Read the story to find out.

Kali walked along the thorny forest track, as slowly as he could. He was on his way to school.

Kali's father was one of the most famous snake-catchers of the Irula tribe. He had caught over a 100 cobras this monsoon and bought many good things for the family. The snake cooperative paid Rs.150 for each poisonous snake. They



took out the poison from snakes to make antivenom serum. When Kali went snake-catching with his father, his legs worked like machines. But now he dragged his feet. "I hate school," he told the bushes as his walk got slower and slower, "and school hates me." The bushes did not seem to understand or feel sorry for him. "It's been two months since I joined school but I don't have a single friend. I get the feeling... I think they think we Irulas are weird."

On the first day of school, each student had to stand up and tell the class three things: his or her name, the name of the village, and what their father did. "My name is Ramu, my village is Meloor, my father is a bus conductor," said the first child. Then came, "Selvi, Orathoor, postman." When it was Kali's

KALI AND THE RAT SNAKE

Key note :-

- Story about a boy KALI.
- Belongs to IRULA TRIBE.
- Tribe famous for SNAKE CATCHERS.
- Father is one of the best snake catcher in his tribe.
- 150₹ for each POISONOUS SNAKE.
- Anti-venom serum made from poisonous snake.

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turn, he was so proud that he felt like a balloon. "I am Kali, my village is Kanathoor, my father is a snake-catcher." The children giggled and nudged one another as if he had said something silly. For the first time in his life, Kali did not feel proud of being an Irula. He wished he were just like others-an ordinary boy with a bus-conductor father. Anyway, that was two months ago. Kali was getting used to it, but it was hard. And his school walk got slower and slower.

Kali reached the school gate as the bell was ringing. As usual, he sat in the back row. Alone. Wishing he had friends. Wishing he could fail and be thrown out of school. But failing wasn't easy. He had tried. But, however badly he wrote his lessons; the teacher seemed pleased with him.

This morning, they had Maths and writing, and then it was break-time. The children rushed outside to have their snacks. Some had idli, others had mixture, a slice of bread or two or three biscuits. Oh no! Fried termites! His favourite actually, but what if someone saw?

He'd have to hide. He sat on the wall, far away from the others and finished his tiffin. Termites didn't taste as good here as at home. "Suppose someone comes near me? Suppose someone asks what I've brought?" Kali wondered anxiously.

The bell rang. Break was over. It was the same teacher but another subject, English. They had to write the English alphabets on their slates. Teacher walked around the room with a stick, hitting a child who had made mistakes. "Lucky," thought Kali. Lucky that he could make the teacher angry! He would try and make a mess of his slate too.

Teacher stood in front of Kali. But instead of a swish of the stick, he got a pat on the back. Teacher held up Kali's slate for the class to see. "Here! This is the sort of work I want to see from everyone," he said.

Now the others would hate him more than ever. Kali could hear the whispering in the classroom. He'd never have friends in school. And he'd never get kicked out.

Comprehension check - I

1. How much did the snake cooperative pay for each poisonous snake ?
2. When had Kali joined school ?
3. What had Kali brought for lunch ?

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Key note :-

- Kali's village KANATHOOR.
- In break time some had idli, others had mixture, a slice of bread or two or three biscuits.
- Kali had termites.

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Just then, something happened in the room. At first Kali didn't understand it, arms and legs flew, bodies ran, tumbled over each other, fell, ran some more. There were shouts from all directions. "Help! Help! Teacher, help!" But the teacher was under his table. Eyes and hands pointed to the ceiling. Now Kali understood.



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There on the roof was a large rat snake. It must have smelled rats on the roof tiles and come after them. By mistake, it had taken the wrong turn and come into the class instead.

Kali's father said that sometimes snakes smelled humans and mistook them for rats. Maybe this one thought, "Wonderful, here's a room full of rats!" The rat snake was wrapped around a palmyra beam on the roof. It stretched out its neck curiously. It must have been surprised by all the excitement. Slowly, more and more of its body uncoiled from the beam. Kali, looking up, knew what was going to happen next. And it did.

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KALI AND THE RAT SNAKE

Key note :-

- A large Rat Snake on the roof.
- Snake wrapped around a Palmyra beam.

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Dhopp! Down fell the rat snake. The noise and confusion grew worse. Chairs crashed. Heads banged. Bodies hit the wall, the floor, one another. Teacher was now on, not under his table, yelling, "Save me! Save me!"

The rat snake was terrified. It went to one side of the room, then the other. The children ran in the opposite direction.

For a few seconds, Kali was too surprised to do anything. His people, the Irulas, always went towards snakes, not away from them. Had everyone gone mad? He walked slowly to where the snake was. He reached out his hand. Suddenly, the room grew still. No sound, no movement. All eyes were on Kali. The rat snake- it was over two metres long-reared back like a horse, opened its mouth wide, hissed and struck. Luckily it missed Kali's hand.

"The bite of a big rat snake is very painful." This was the thought that went through Kali's mind as he grabbed the snake behind the head. His other hand gripped the long muscular body. Soon, Kali was all wrapped up in snake.

Kali thought he would find a big bag to put the rat snake in. He'd take it home to father. The Vandalur zoo near Chennai would pay a good price for rat snakes. He'd buy his baby sister a new dress. But what was this noise? What was happening? Was there another snake in the room? Confused, Kali looked up.

Everyone was clapping and cheering. And then they were chanting, "Ka-Li! Nand Ri ! Ka-Li! Nand-Ri! Ka-Li thank-you!" It was so wonderful. Kali's eyes became wet with happiness. He grinned and the clapping grew louder. "You saved us!" shouted one of the boys. "How brave you are!"

"From now on, you sit next to me!"

"No, me!"

And the children started quarrelling about whom Kali would sit next to. "Who taught you to be so brave?" asked Ramesh, the class bully. "Come on, name it. We'll give you whatever you want."

"Well, what I want now" replied Kali "is a bag. A big one. To put this fellow into."

Ten children ran off in ten different directions to find bags. The others looked at Kali with admiration. From the corner of his eye, Kali saw the teacher climb down from his desk. The teacher walked up to Kali, but he was careful

KALI AND THE RAT SNAKE

Key note :-

- Rat snake over two meter long.
- Bite of big rat snake is very painful.
- Vandalur zoo (Chennai).

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not to get too close. "Silly children!" he scolded. "Why did you get so scared? Running all over the place, just because of a non-poisonous snake!"

The teacher walked back to his desk. As soon as his back was turned, Kali and the children grinned at one another. Secret grins, the kind that friends used.

Comprehension check - II

1. Why were the children in the class shouting for help?
2. Who was sitting on the desk?
3. For whom were the children clapping and cheering?

About the author

Zai Whitaker has written a dozen books, most of them for children and young readers. She writes about wildlife and conservation. Her interest in this array began when she was a young girl in Mumbai, because of the several naturalists in her family. After college, Zai worked at the Snake Park and Crocodile Bank in Chennai.

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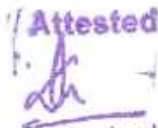
Know the words

antivenom serum	-	an animal serum containing antivenins used in medicines to treat poisoning
weird	-	strange, unnatural
nudged	-	gently pushed
termites	-	a small, pale bodied insect that feeds on wood
palmyra	-	a tall Asian palm tree with fan-shaped leaves
grinned	-	smiled broadly

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